

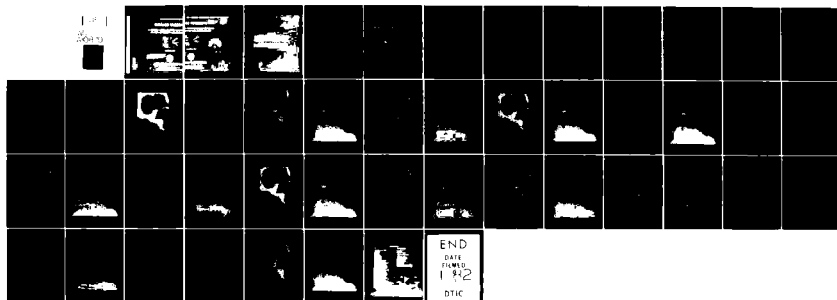
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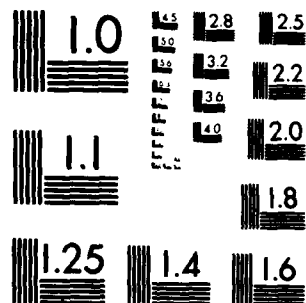
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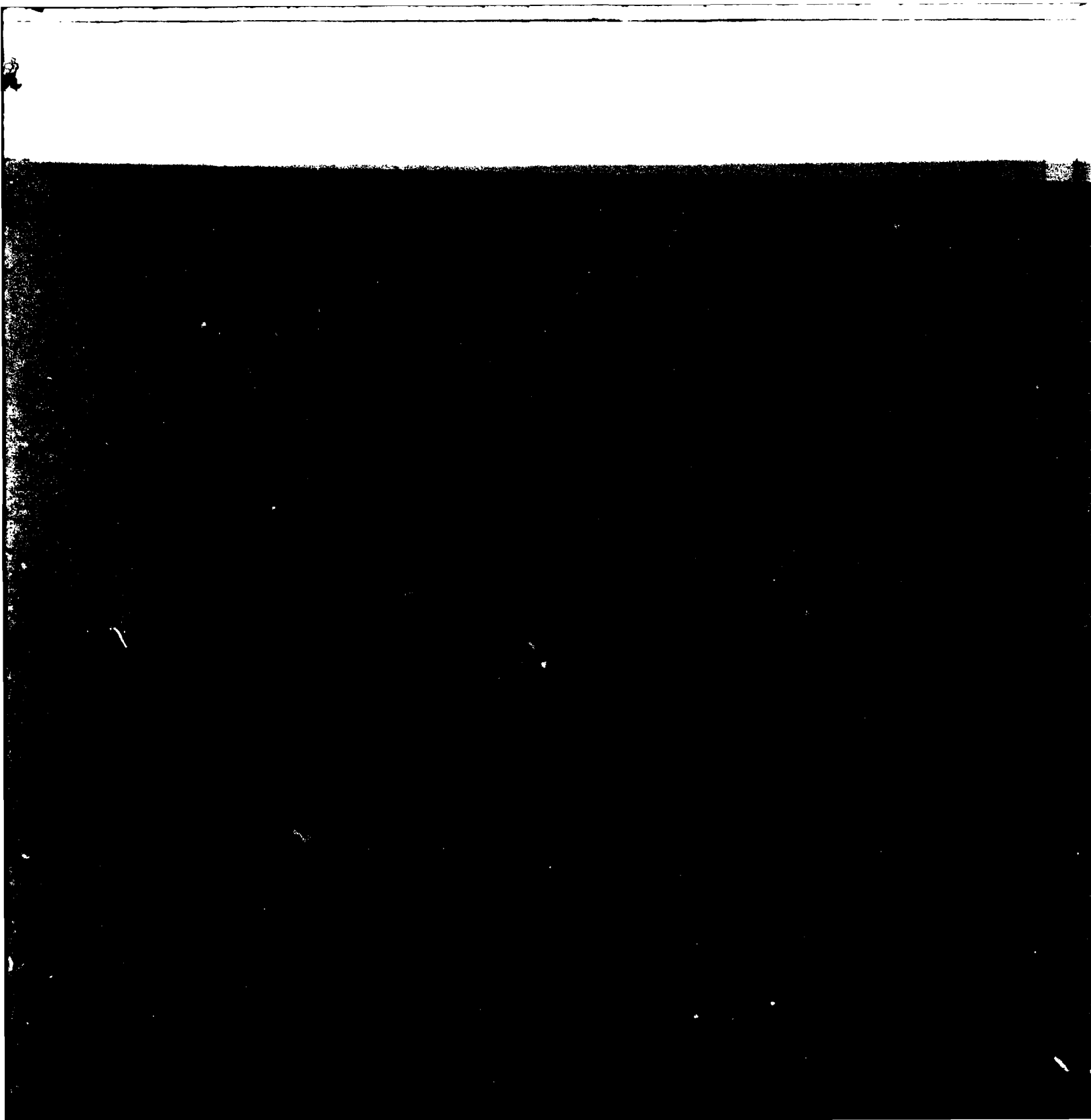




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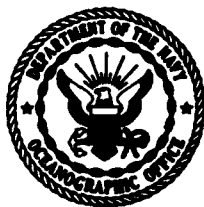
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# **SURFACE CURRENTS**

**SOUTHWEST NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN INCLUDING  
THE GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN SEA**



**OCTOBER 1981**

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**NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHIC OFFICE  
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19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Surface Currents North Atlantic Gulf of Mexico Caribbean Sea			
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This atlas, and the series of which it is a part, is computer generated and automatically plotted. It makes available to the user the most recent surface current data collected and will be updated whenever sufficient amounts of data are added to the data file. This and the other atlases are based on a vast quantity of data as compared to the previous manually-compiled editions printed in the mid-thirties.			

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20. Continued

The surface current information is based mainly on ship data. It is the difference between the dead reckoning position and determined by any type of navigational fix. This difference is the direction and speed of the current.

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The surface current information is based mainly on ship drift, which is the difference between the dead reckoning position and the position determined by any type of navigational fix. This difference describes the direction and speed of the current.

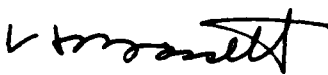
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## FOREWORD

THIS ATLAS, ONE IN A SERIES OF 43 REGIONAL SURFACE CURRENT ATLASES, IS PRODUCED TO FULFILL A NEED OF NAVY PLANNING STAFFS AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE LATEST AVAILABLE OCEAN SURFACE CURRENT DATA. THESE ATLASES ADD TO THE WEALTH OF NAUTICAL INFORMATION UPON WHICH OPERATIONAL PLANNING, NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY, AND SHIPPING ECONOMY DEPEND. RAPID PRODUCTION AND WIDE DISTRIBUTION OF THIS ATLAS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY COMPUTER TECHNIQUES.

THE CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF SURFACE CURRENT DATA RECEIVED OVER THE YEARS IS MADE POSSIBLE LARGELY BY THE MORE THOROUGH REPORTS OF VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS IN RECENT YEARS. THE DEFENSE MAPPING AGENCY, THE OCEANOGRAPHIC OFFICE, AND THE USER OF THE ATLASES RELY ON THE PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE MAN WHO HAS "BEEN THERE." MARINERS, IN REPORTING THEIR OBSERVATIONS, RENDER A SERVICE NOT ONLY TO THEMSELVES BUT ALSO TO ALL "WHO GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS." WITH THE ADVENT OF NUCLEAR POWER, ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION AIDS, AND 300,000-TON SHIPS, UP-TO-DATE, RAPIDLY DISSEMINATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND NAVIGATIONAL INFORMATION HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT.

  
C. H. BASSETT  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Commander

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## SURFACE CURRENT ATLASES

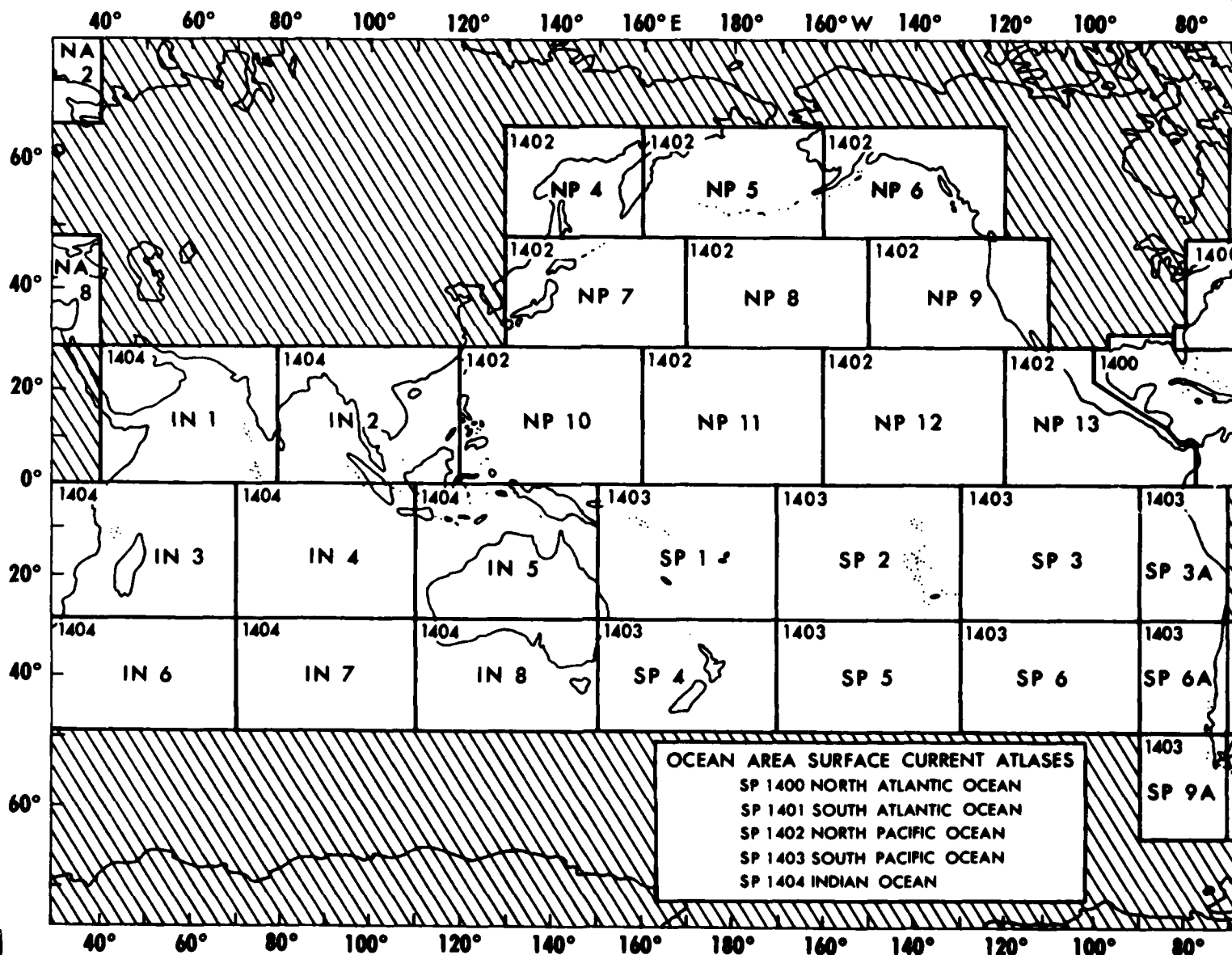
THIS SERIES OF COMPUTERIZED ATLASES REPLACES THE OLD HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE ATLASES OF SURFACE CURRENTS (HOP 566, 568, 569, 570) WHICH WERE MANUALLY COMPILED FROM DATA OBTAINED DURING THE PERIOD 1903 - 1934. THESE NEW ATLASES CONFORM TO THE STANDARD NAVY OCEAN AREA AND REGION INDEX LIMITS SHOWN BELOW: e.g., NOO SP 1402-NP 10 COVERS NORTH PACIFIC REGION 10 EAST OF THE PHILIPPINES.

AS AMOUNTS OF NEW DATA WARRANT

THESE GRAPHICS MAY NOT BE AREAS AS THE NORTH SEA, PERSIAN CURRENTS ARE STRONGLY TIDAL. P PREDICTABLE HOURLY CHANGES OF

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DATA FILE ASSURE THE INCLUSION OF THE LATEST, HIGH QUALITY SURFACE CURRENT DATA AVAILABLE. THE FILE NOW CONTAINS MORE THAN 4,200,000 OBSERVATIONS AND A GENERAL UPDATE OF THE FILE WILL BE MADE

### INDEX



# **SURFACE CURRENT ATLASES**

OFFICE

AS AMOUNTS OF NEW DATA WARRANT, MOST LIKELY EVERY 12 - 18 MONTHS.

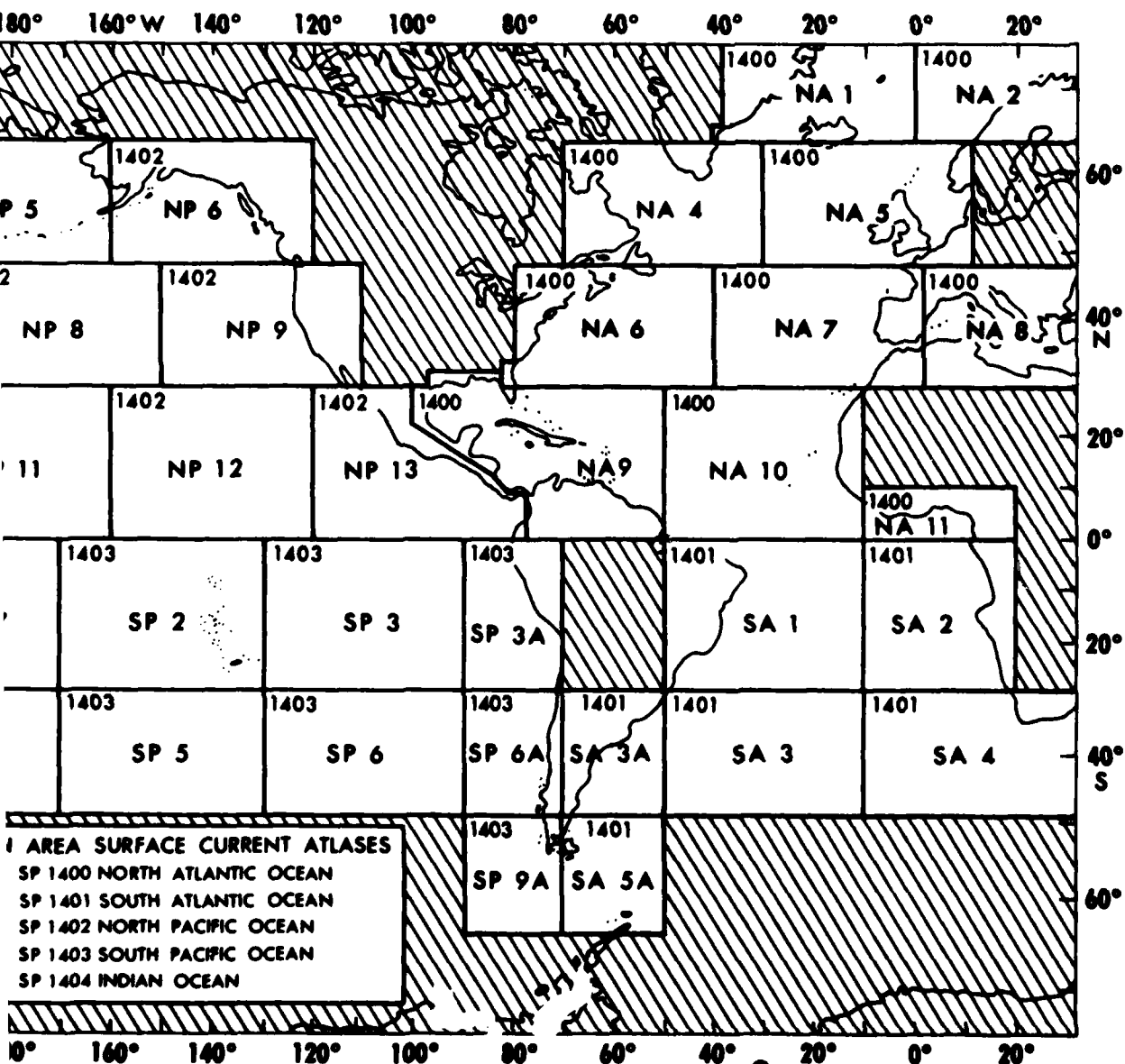
ASES  
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PPINES.

THESE GRAPHICS MAY NOT BE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ACTUAL FLOW IN SUCH AREAS AS THE NORTH SEA, PERSIAN GULF, GULF OF THAILAND, AND YELLOW SEA WHERE CURRENTS ARE STRONGLY TIDAL. FOR SUCH AREAS, OTHER SOURCES DESCRIBING PREDICTABLE HOURLY CHANGES OF TIDAL CURRENTS SHOULD BE CONSULTED.

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## **INDEX**



## Introduction

The Surface Current Data File, from which these atlases are derived, consists primarily of over four million ship set and drift observations. These data were collected by the Netherlands, Japan, Britain, France, and the United States. The file is supplemented by several thousand Geomagnetic Electrokinetograph (GEK) observations, mostly Japanese. The file spans the period from the early 1850's to the present. The earliest observations were collected by the Netherlands and Great Britain; those of the 1960's through the present are primarily United States data.

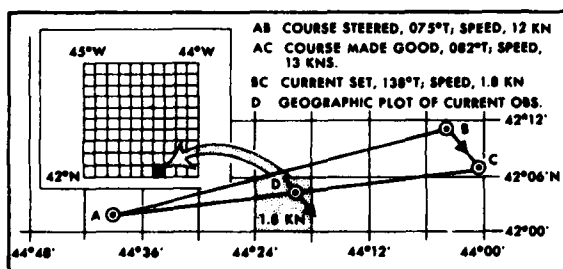
## General Quality

The quality of this data file is high for this type of computed value. The data have been screened for duplication. Observations taken under adverse conditions (i.e. high winds in excess of 22 knots, waves higher than 8 feet, or sampling interval between observations greater than 12 hours) have been eliminated. Consideration was given to the reliability of the observer; doubtful shipboard computations of set and drift were edited; and observations with erroneous locations (mostly observations on land) have been eliminated. The accepted data are considered most useful when used collectively as in summaries where a number of observations show trends.

## General Observation Technique

The set (direction) and drift (speed) are computed by the navigator from the difference between the dead reckoning (DR) position and the position determined by any type of navigational fix. The drift can be determined along any straight line track and includes all factors which cause changes in the DR position. When a fix is obtained, the current set (direction) is FROM the DR position TO the fix; the drift (speed) is equal to the distance in nautical miles between the DR and the fix, divided by the number of hours since the last fix. For successive observations, the TO POSITION of one observation becomes the FROM POSITION of the next observation.

Because the influence of current may vary along a ship's track, the MEAN POSITION of the track is assigned as the geographic location of the current observation. An example of a current computation is shown in the figure below.



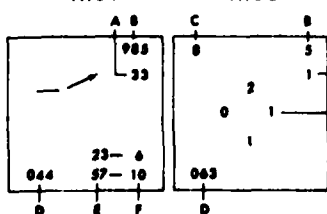
EXAMPLE OF A SURFACE CURRENT (SHIP'S DRIFT) OBSERVATION

## Data Presentation

The following legend shows two types of surface current presentations by 1° quadrangle, type 1 with 12 or more observations and type 2 with fewer than 12 observations. Where there are 11 or fewer observations within a 1° quadrangle, the total number of observations is shown within the 90° quadrant containing the observations.

## LEGEND

### TYPE 1



A NUMBER OF CALMS (INCLUDED IN TOTAL OBSERVATIONS).

B TOTAL OBSERVATIONS (999 ALSO USED FOR 1000 OR MORE OBSERVATIONS).

C MEAN SPEED (0.8 KNOT) FOR ALL OBSERVATIONS.

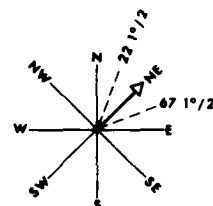
D VECTOR RESULTANT DIRECTION (°T) FOR ALL OBSERVATIONS.

E PERCENT FREQUENCIES (5% PRIMARY DIRECTION, 2% SECONDARY DIRECTION).

F MEAN SPEEDS (1.0 KNOT PRIMARY DIRECTION, 0.6 KNOT SECONDARY DIRECTION).

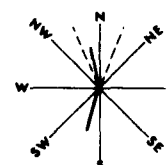
G NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS BY QUADRANT.

If there are 12 or more observations in a 1° quadrangle, the vector resultant is shown by vector resultants as follows:

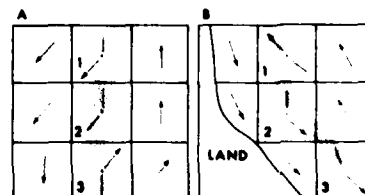


(1) Persistent Current - 60 percent or more of all observations fall within a 45° sector of the 8-point compass.

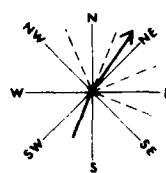
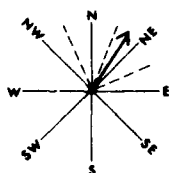
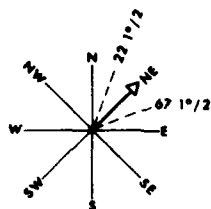
(2) Prevailing Curr - All observations fall within 45° sectors.



(4) Bifurcal Flow - Practically all observations are concentrated in opposite pairs of 45° sectors, and one pair contains at least 80 percent as many observations as the opposite pair. This generally indicates variability that occurs in zones of entrainment between opposing currents (see examples A and B, quadrangles 1, 2, and 3).



If there are 12 or more observations in a 1° quadrangle, the surface current is depicted by vector resultants as follows:

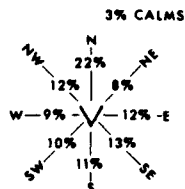
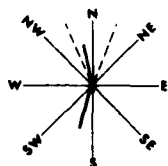


(1) Persistent Current - 60 percent or more of all observations fall within a 45° sector of the 8-point compass.

(2) Prevailing Current - 70 percent or more of all observations fall within two adjacent 45° sectors.

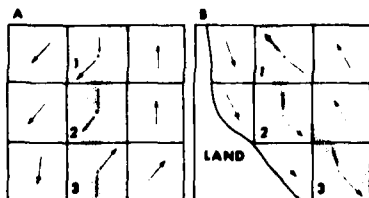
(3) Primary Current with Secondary Direction - (a) Primary Current - 50 percent or more of all observations fall within three adjacent 45° sectors.

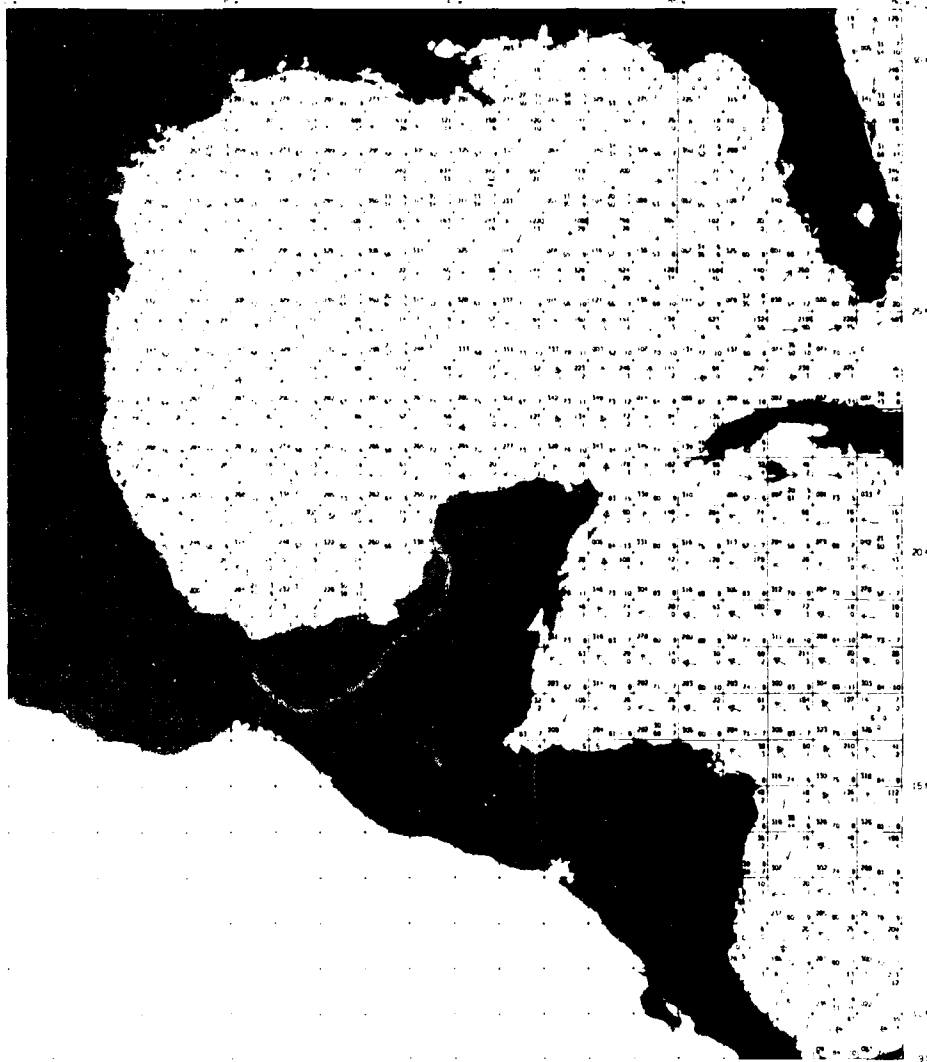
(b) Secondary Direction - 20 percent or more of all observations fall within a 45° sector, and the two resultant vector directions are separated by more than 90° of arc.



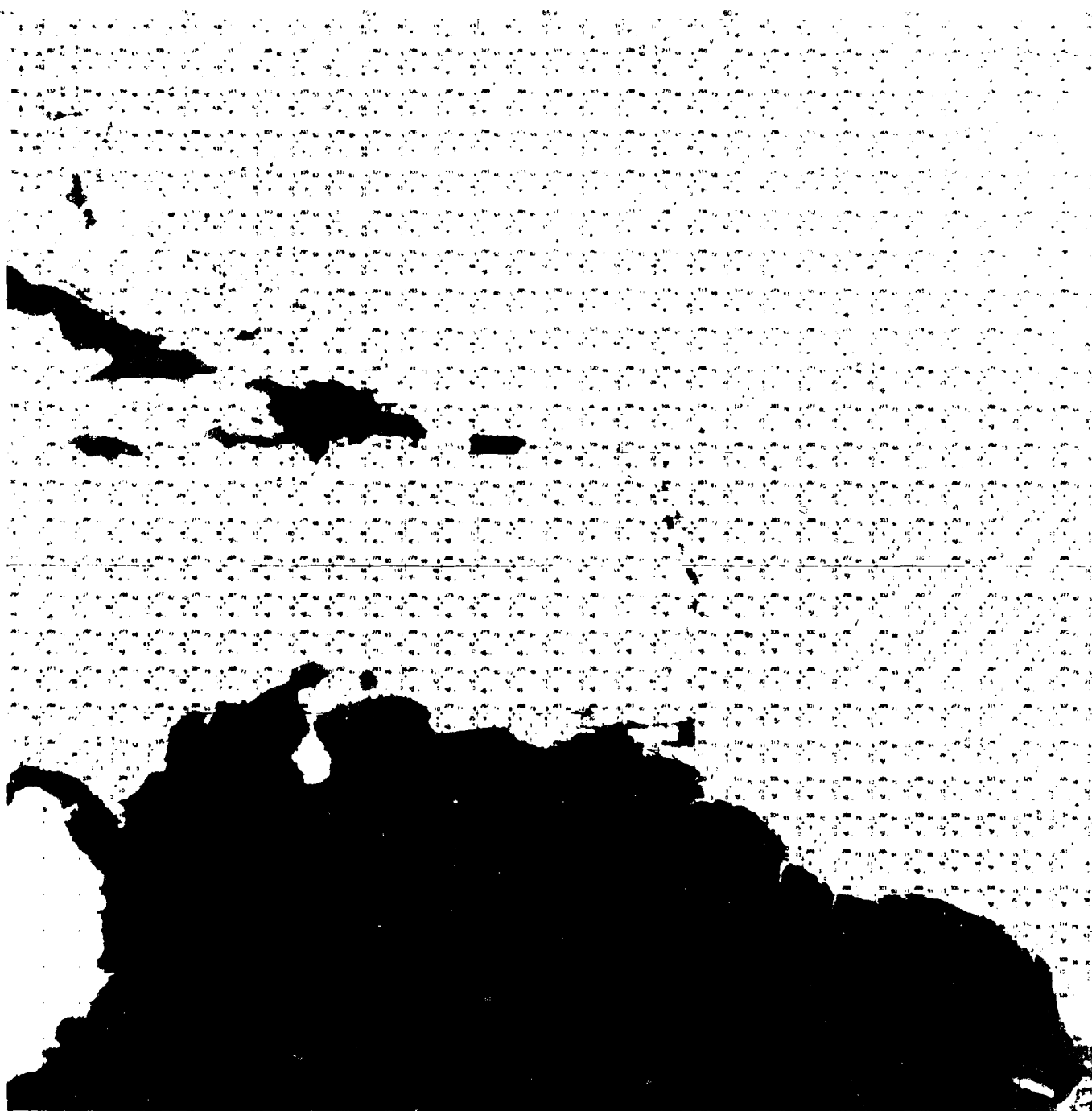
(4) Bizonal Flow - Practically all observations are concentrated in opposite pairs of 45° sectors, and one pair contains at least 80 percent as many observations as the opposite pair. This generally indicates variability that occurs in zones of entrainment between opposing currents (see examples A and B, quadrangles 1, 2, and 3).

(5) Variable Current - The 45° sector with most observations has less than 25 percent of all observations; direction is indeterminate.



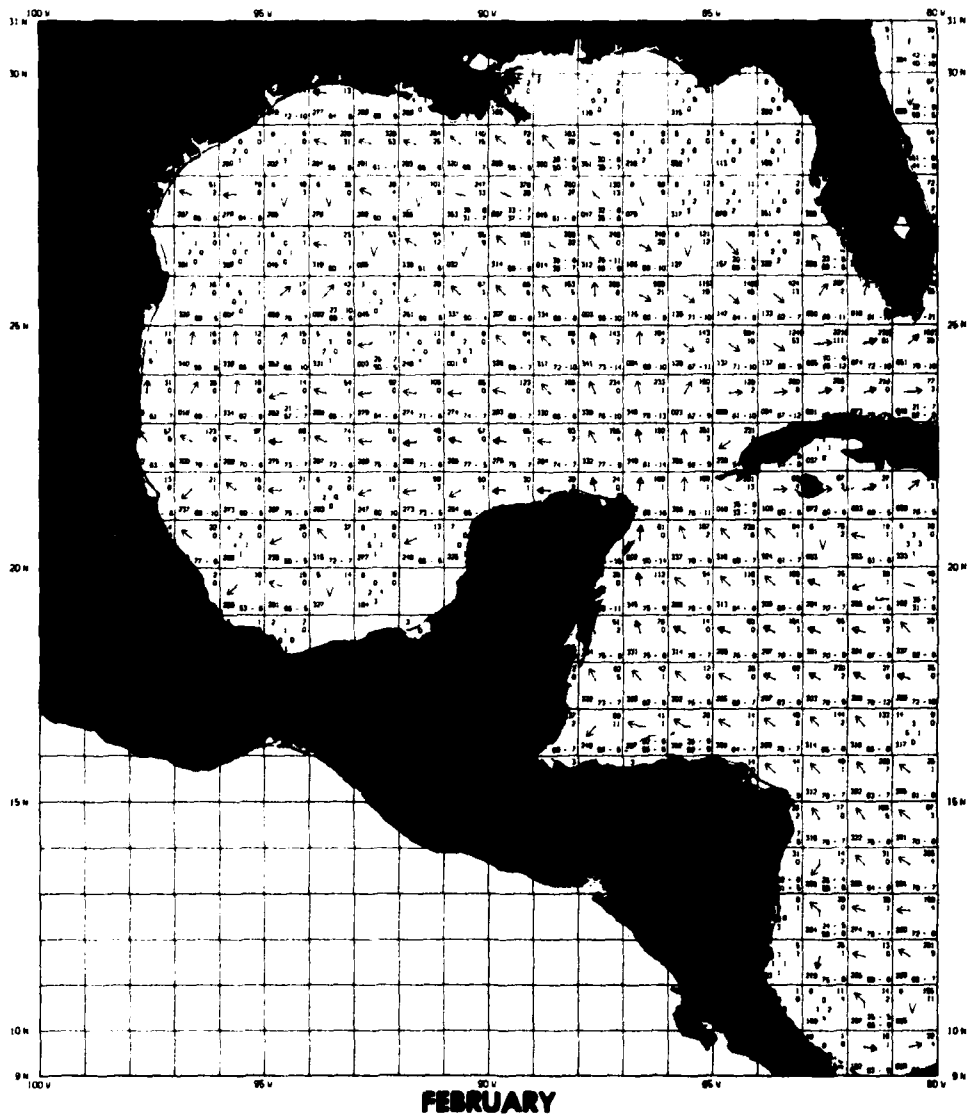


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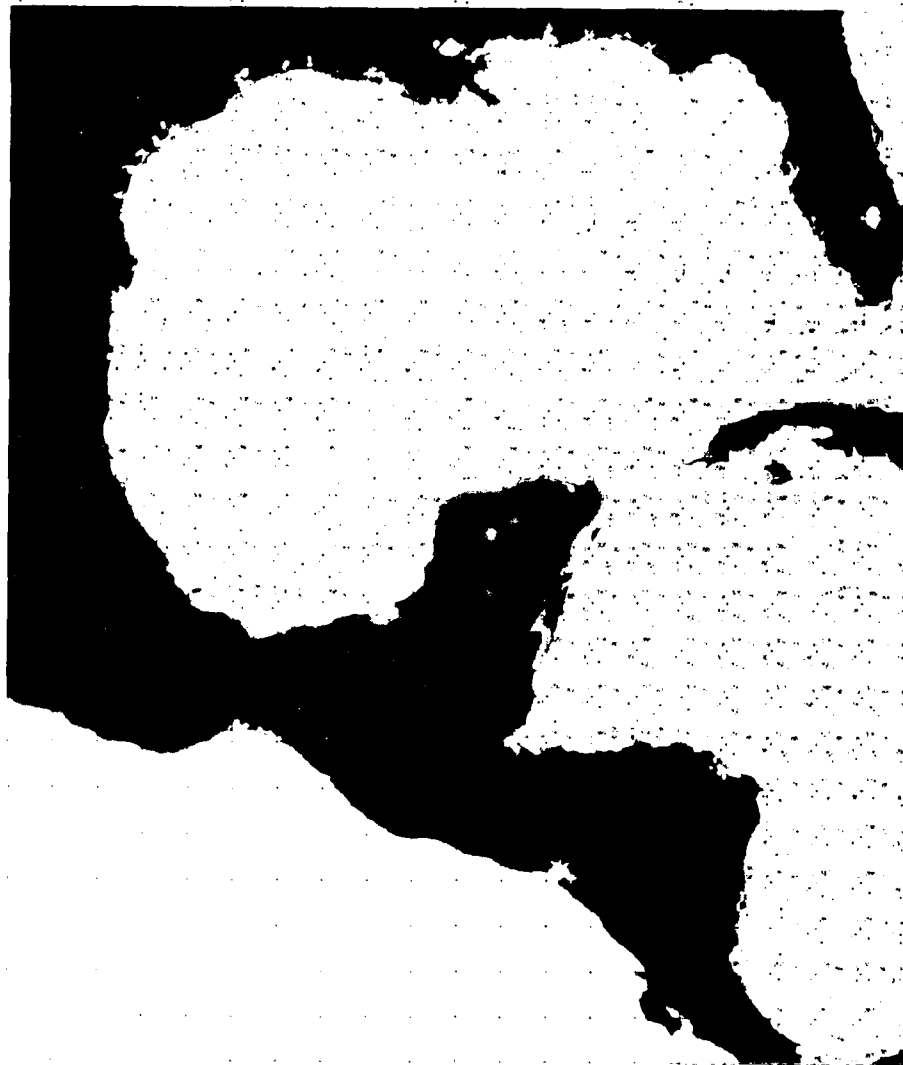
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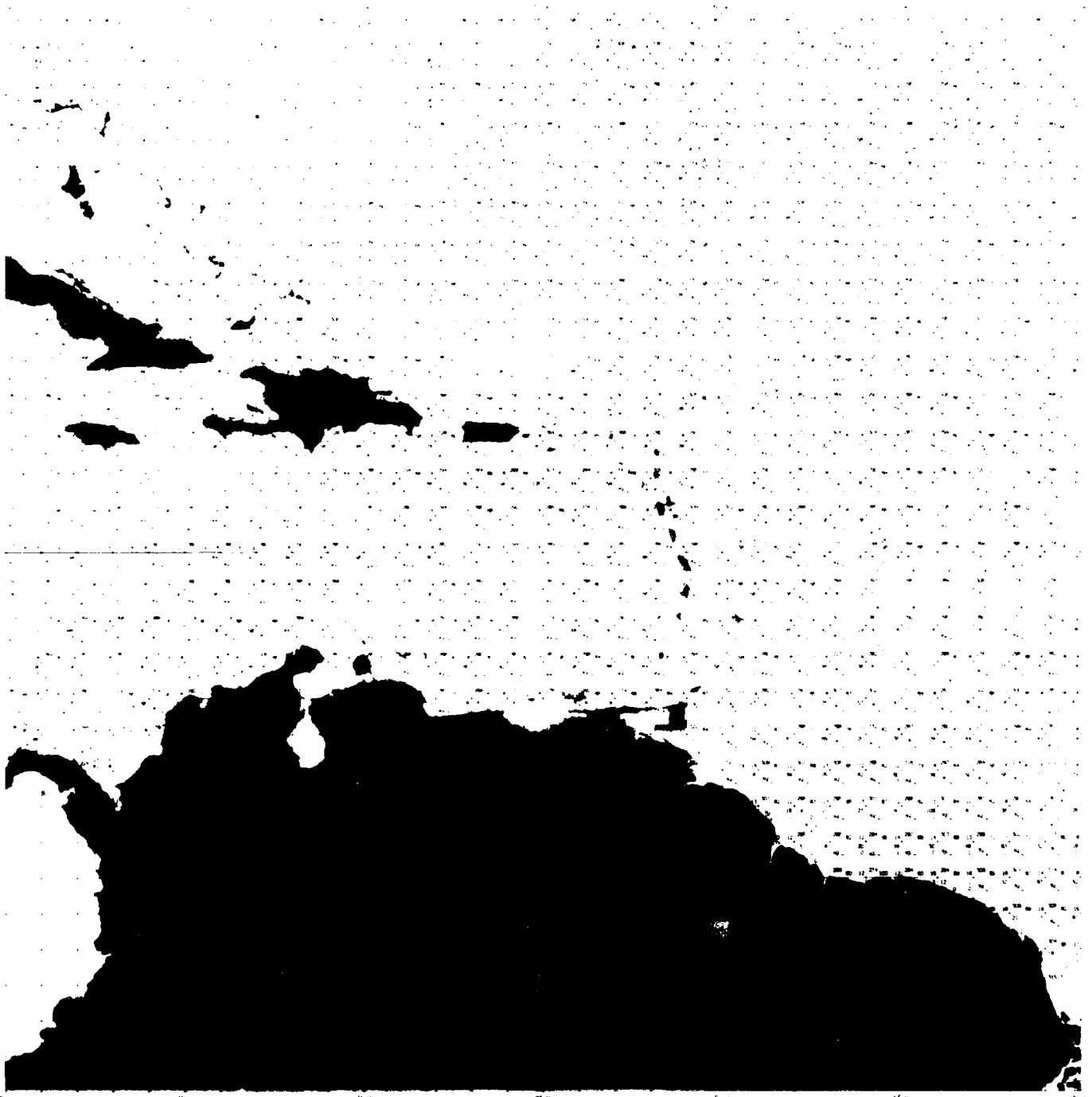




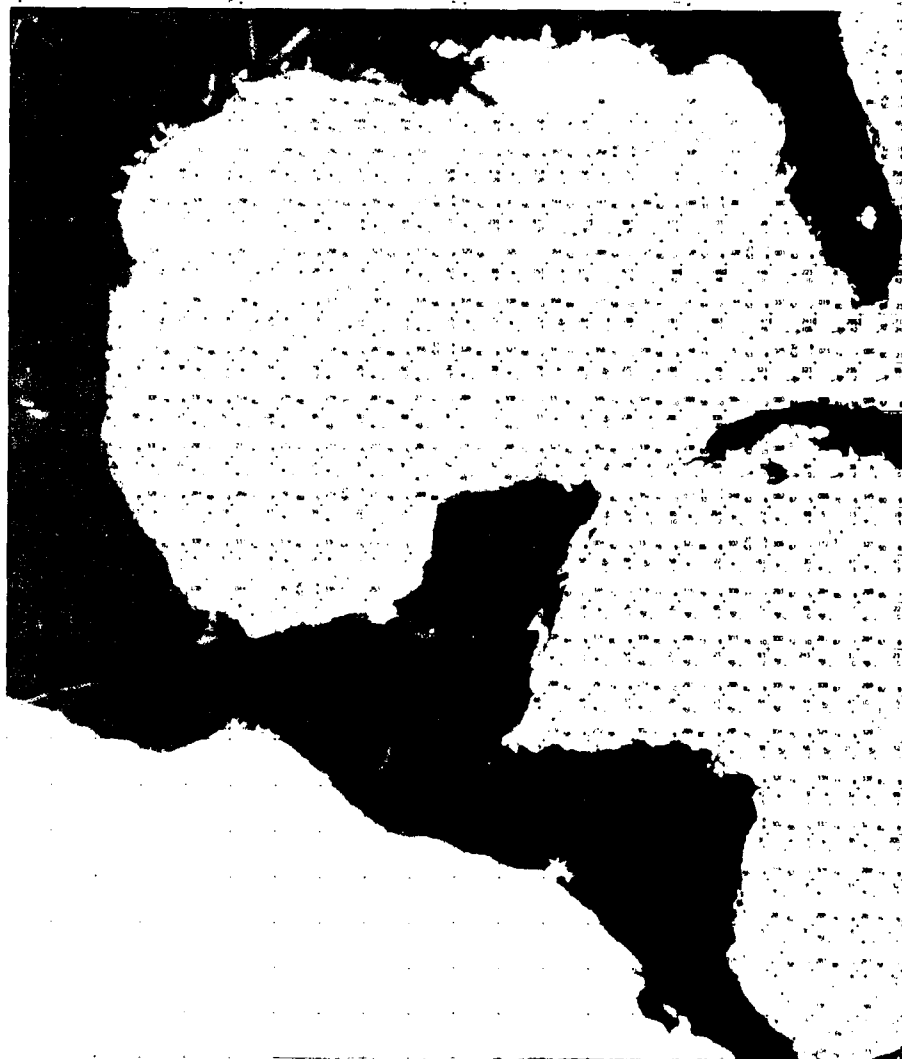
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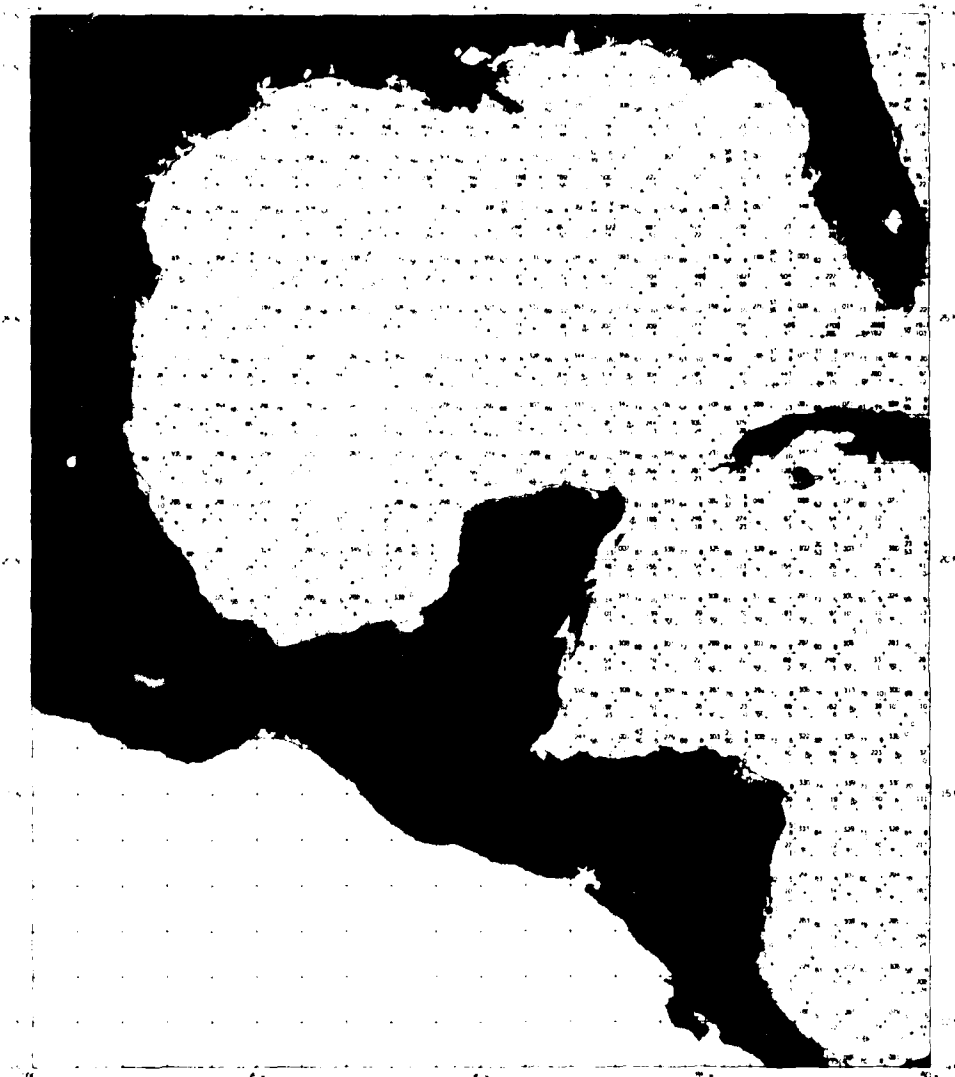
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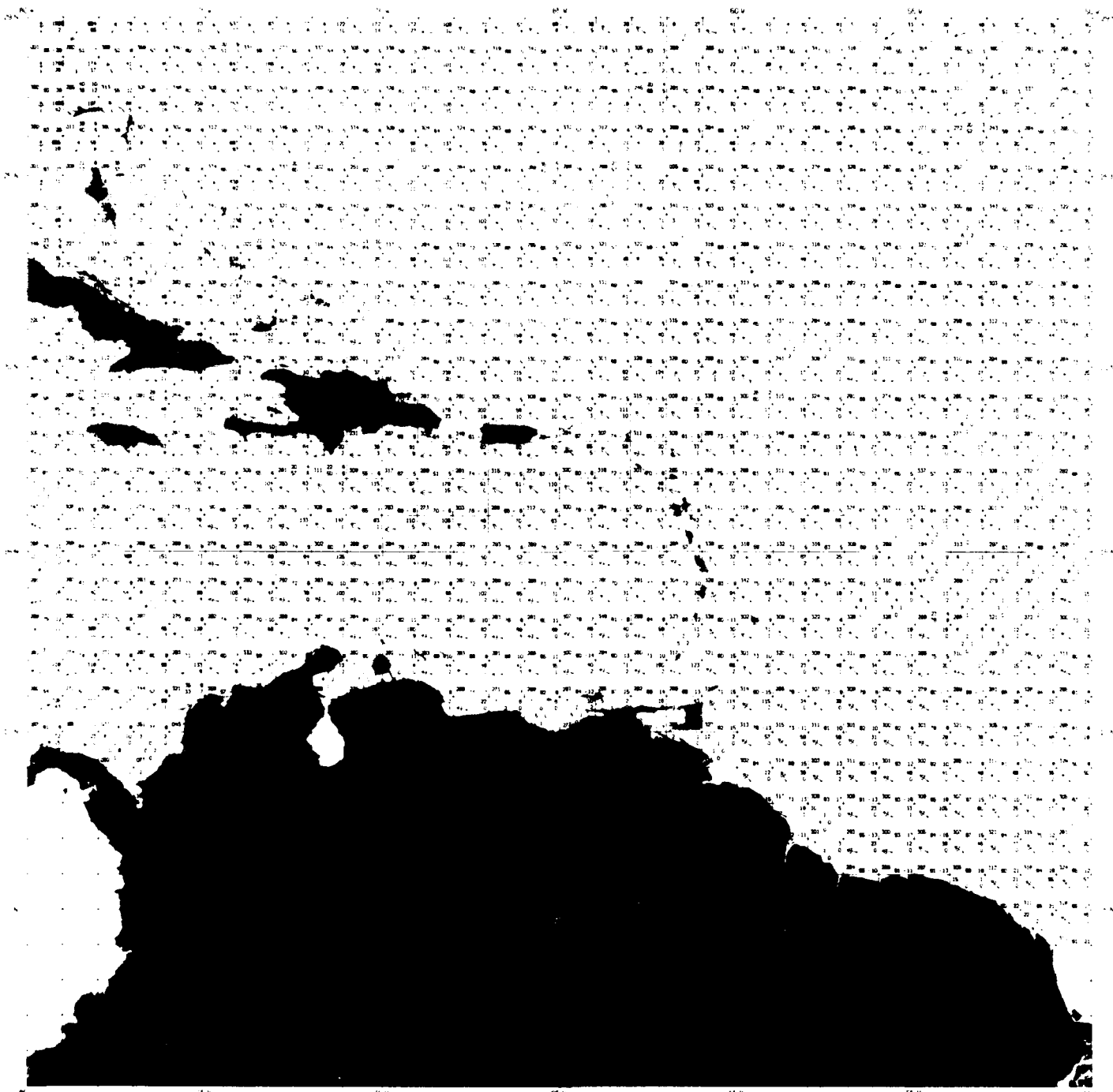
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APRIL

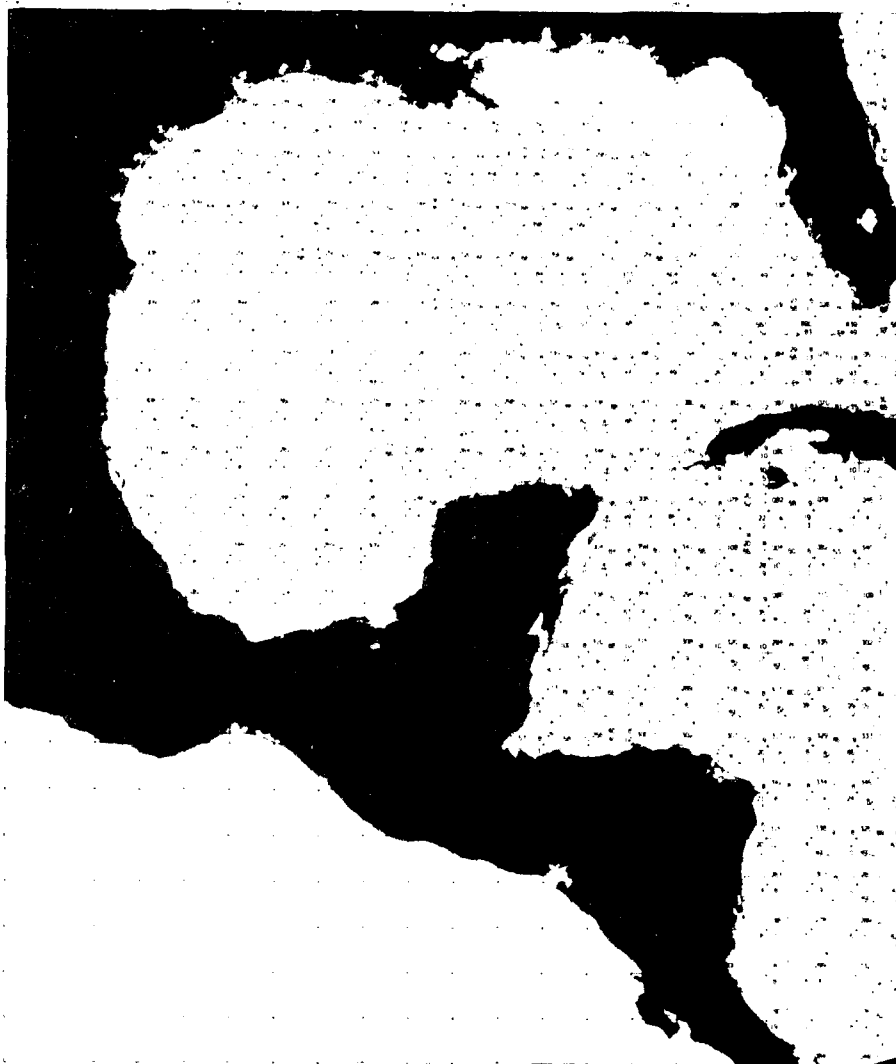


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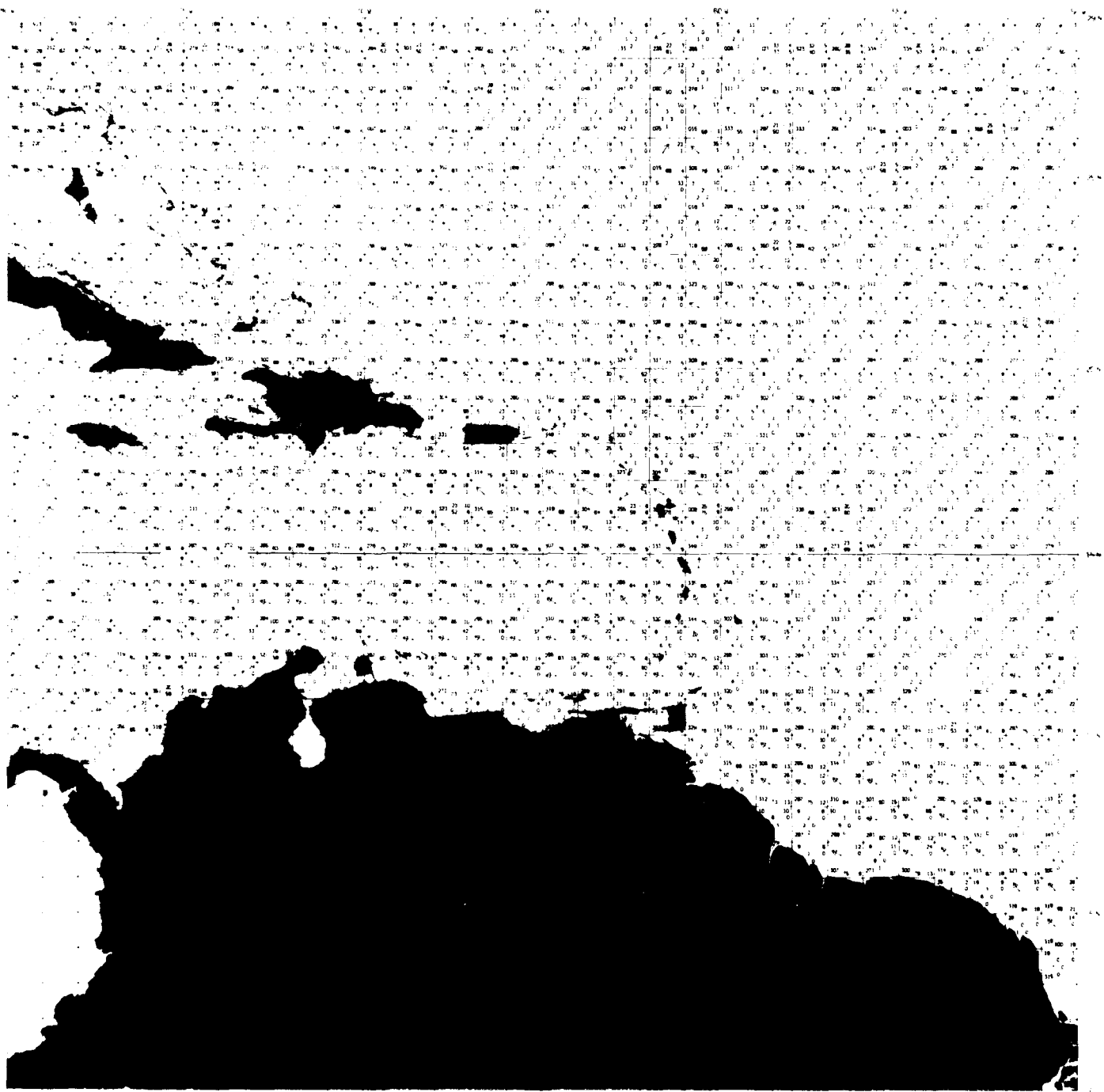


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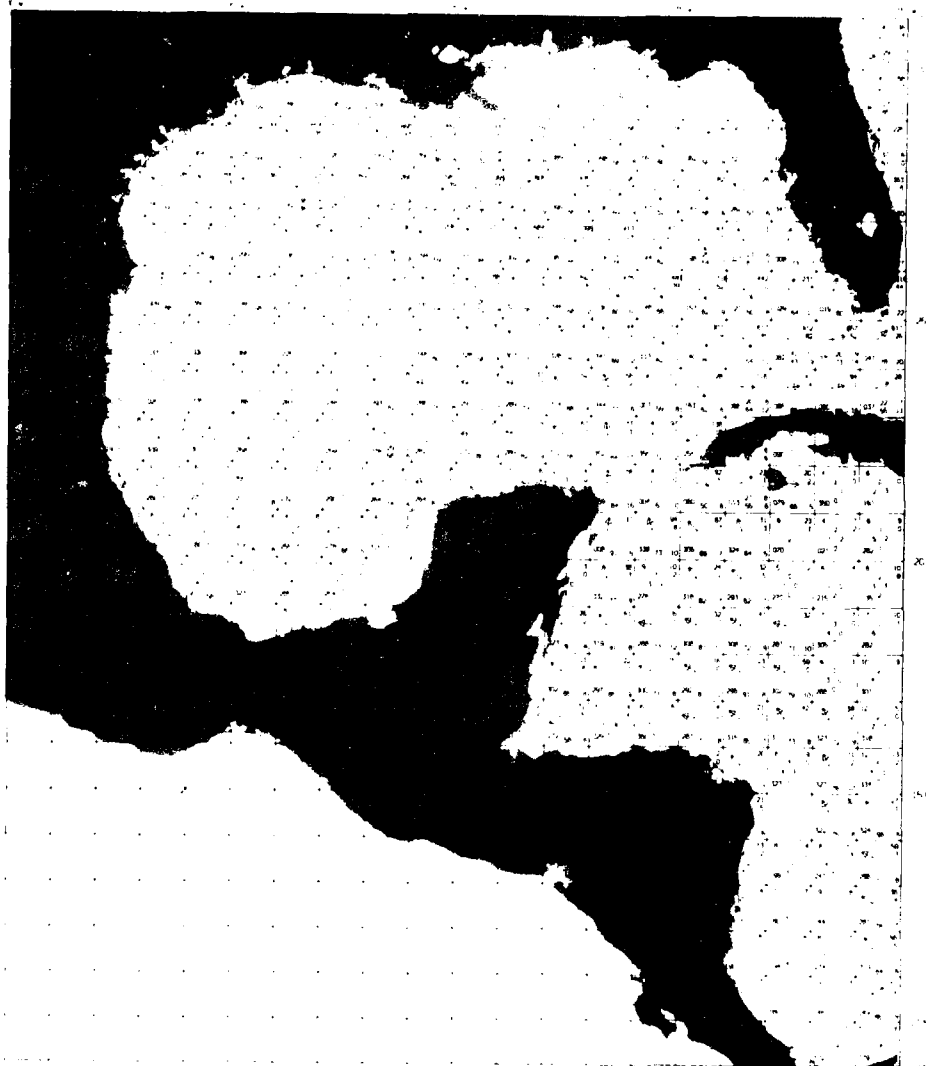




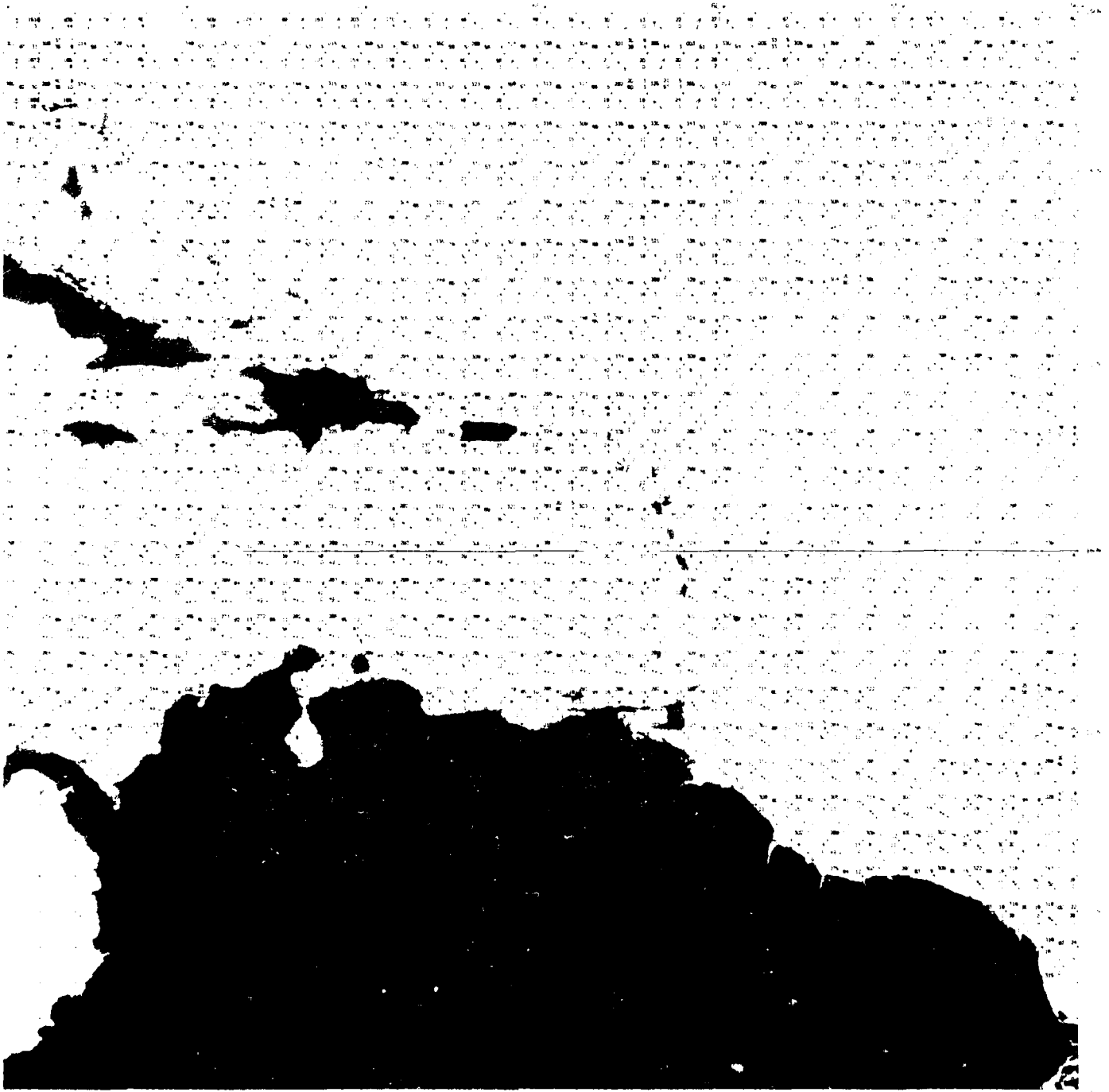
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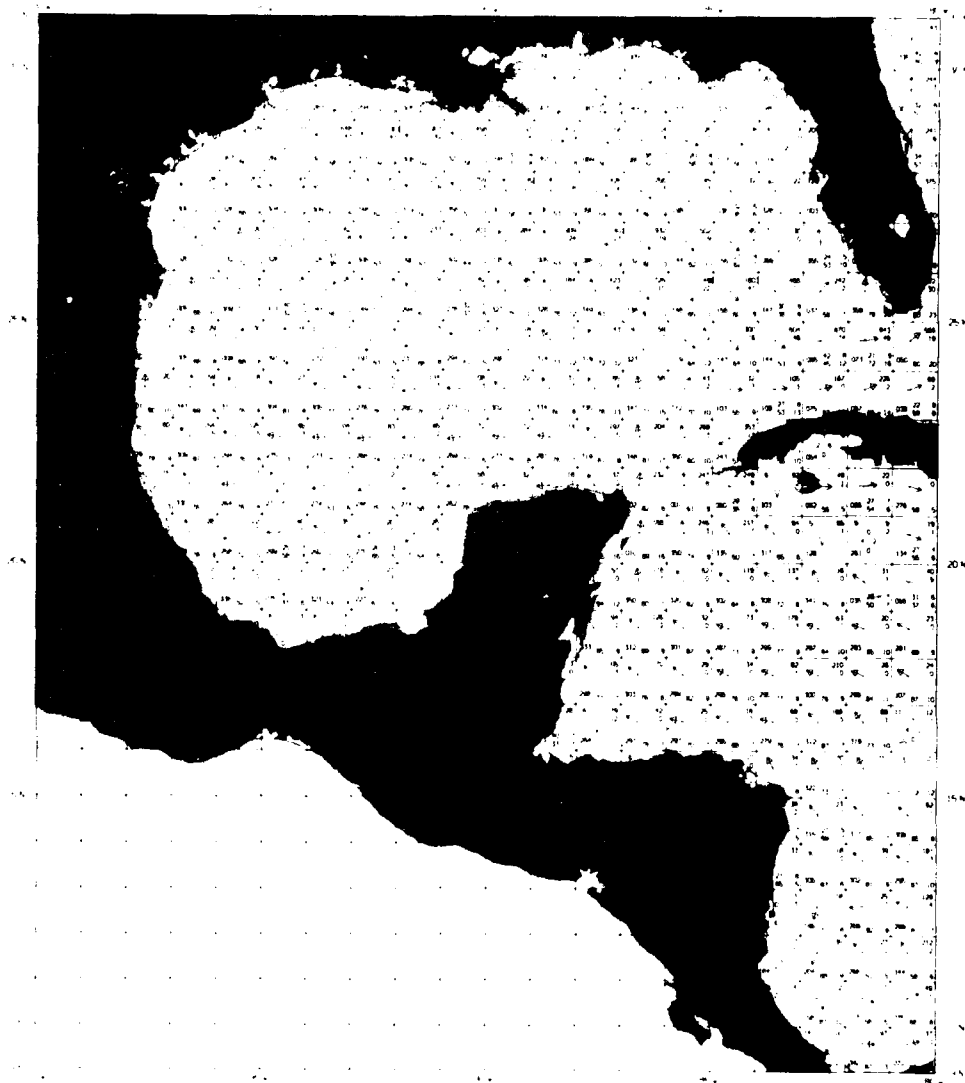
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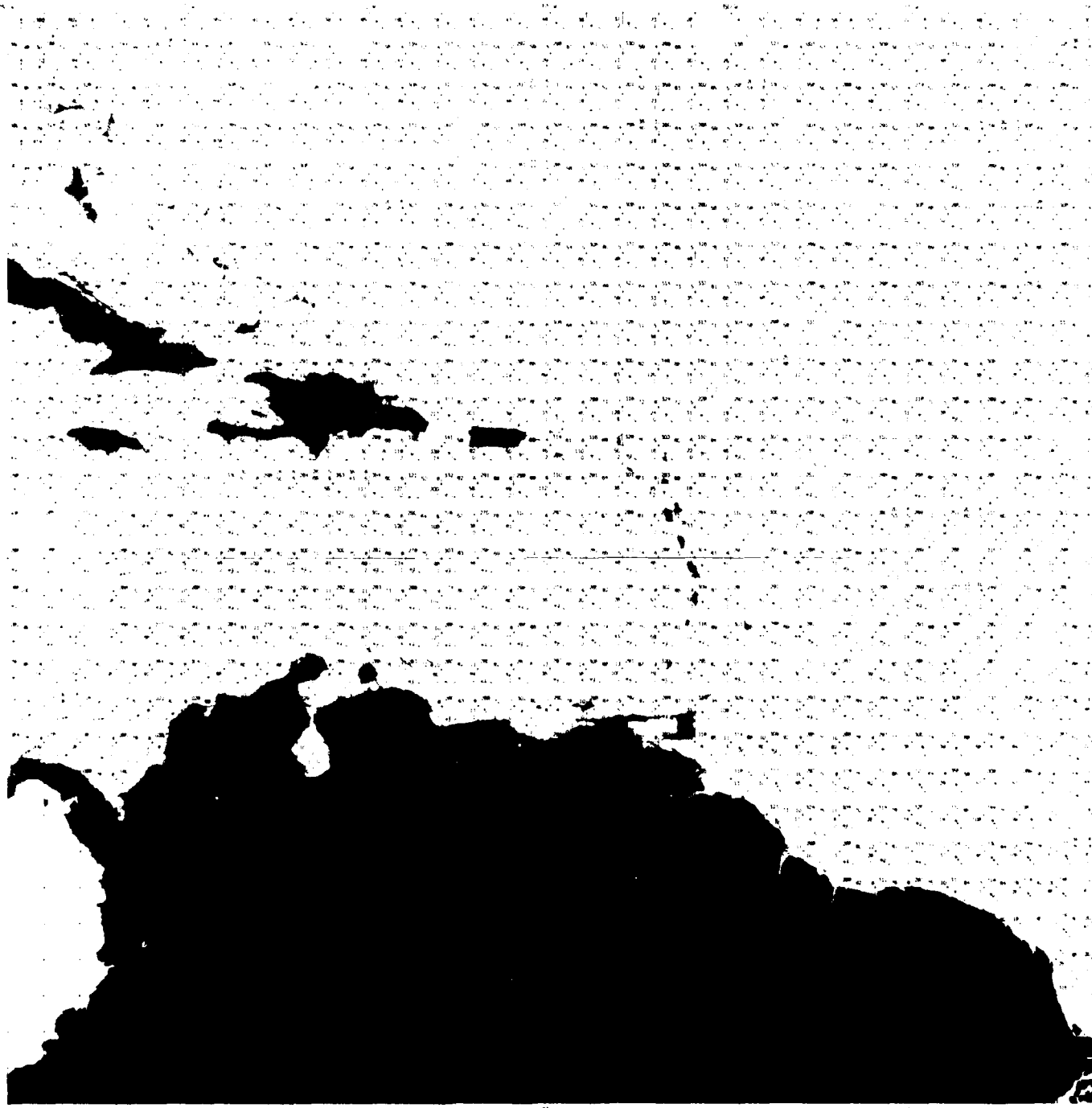
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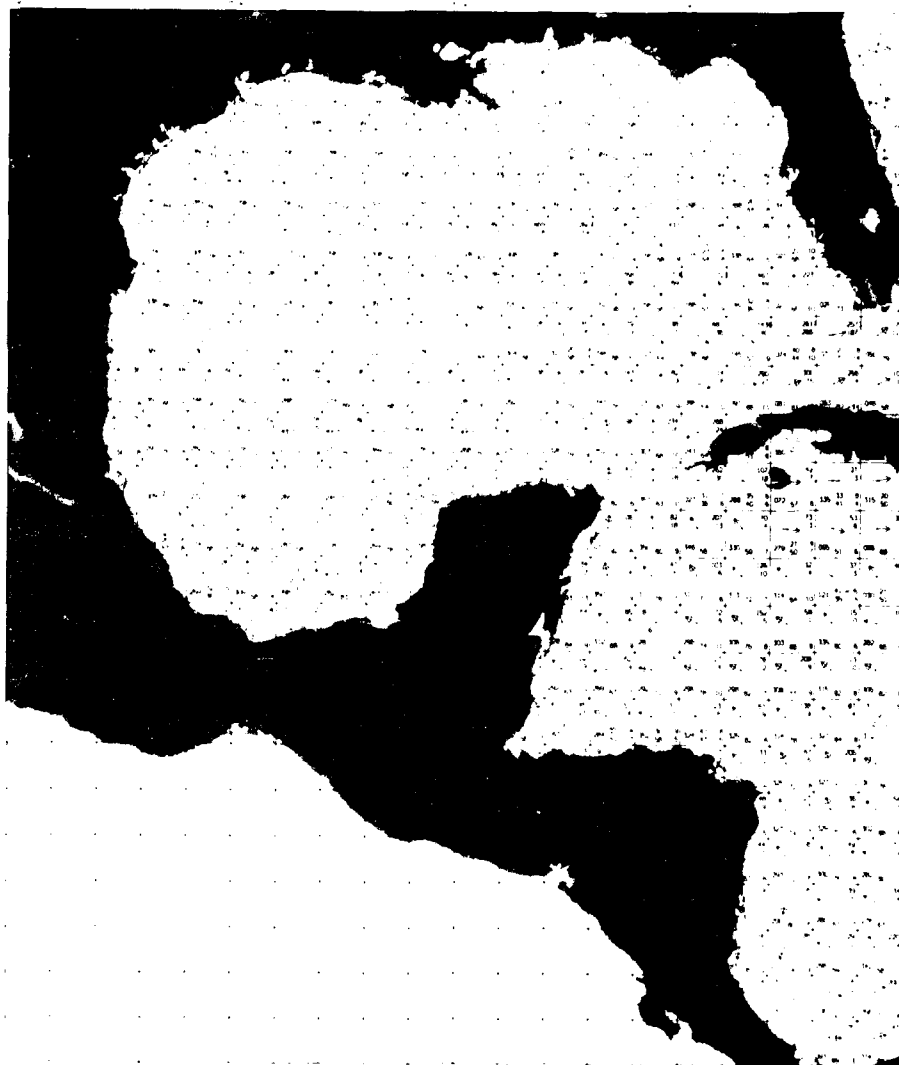
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AUGUST



**SEPTEMBER**



SEPTEMBER

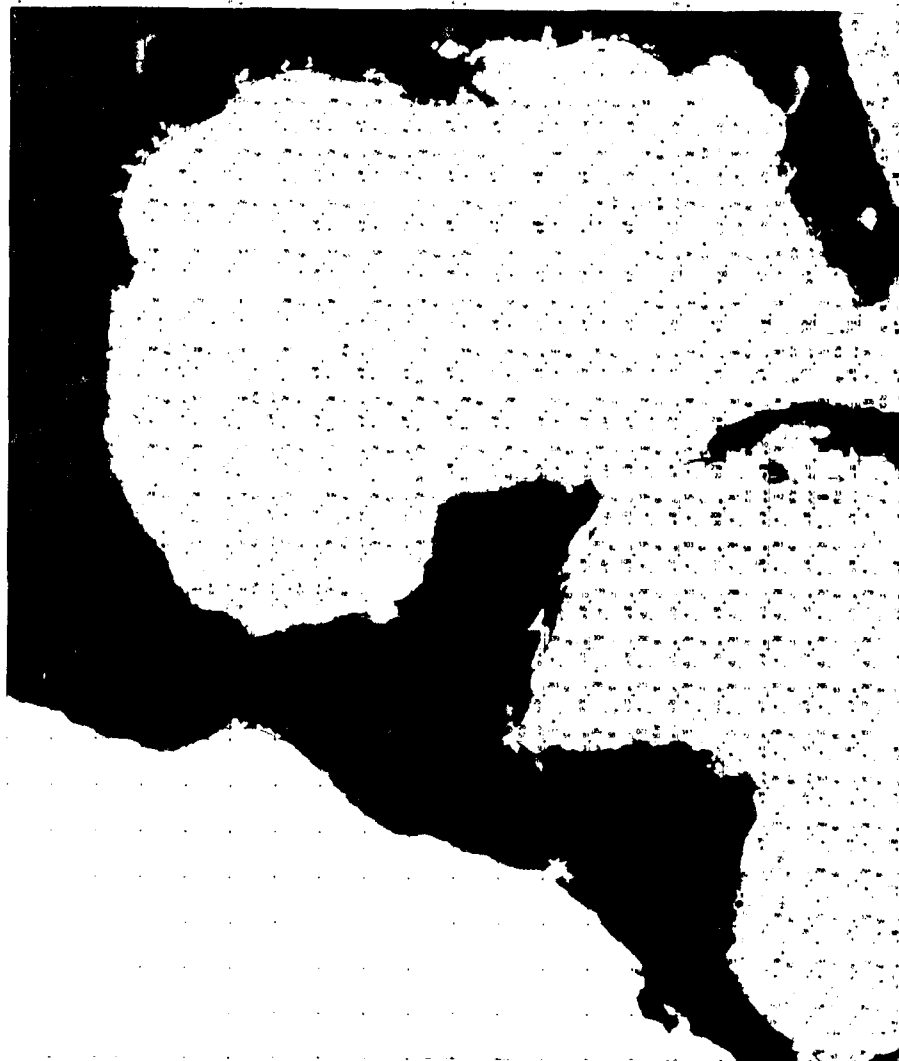




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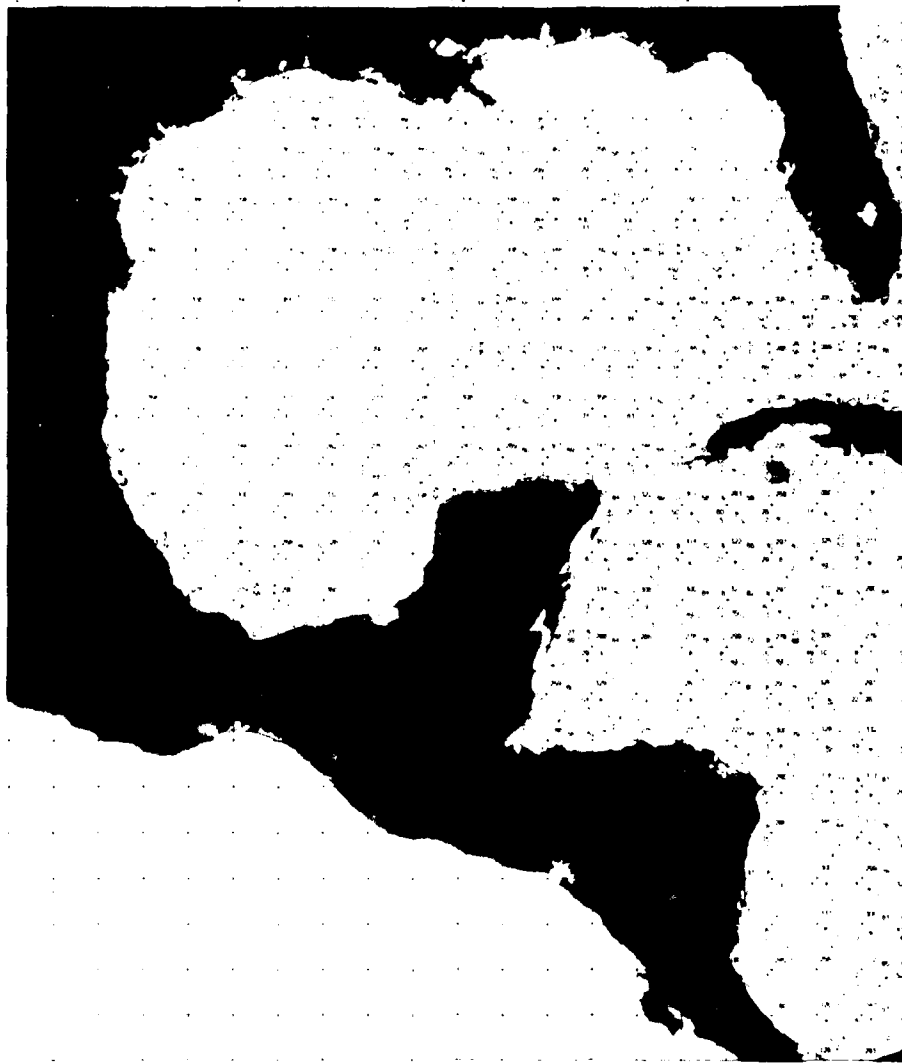
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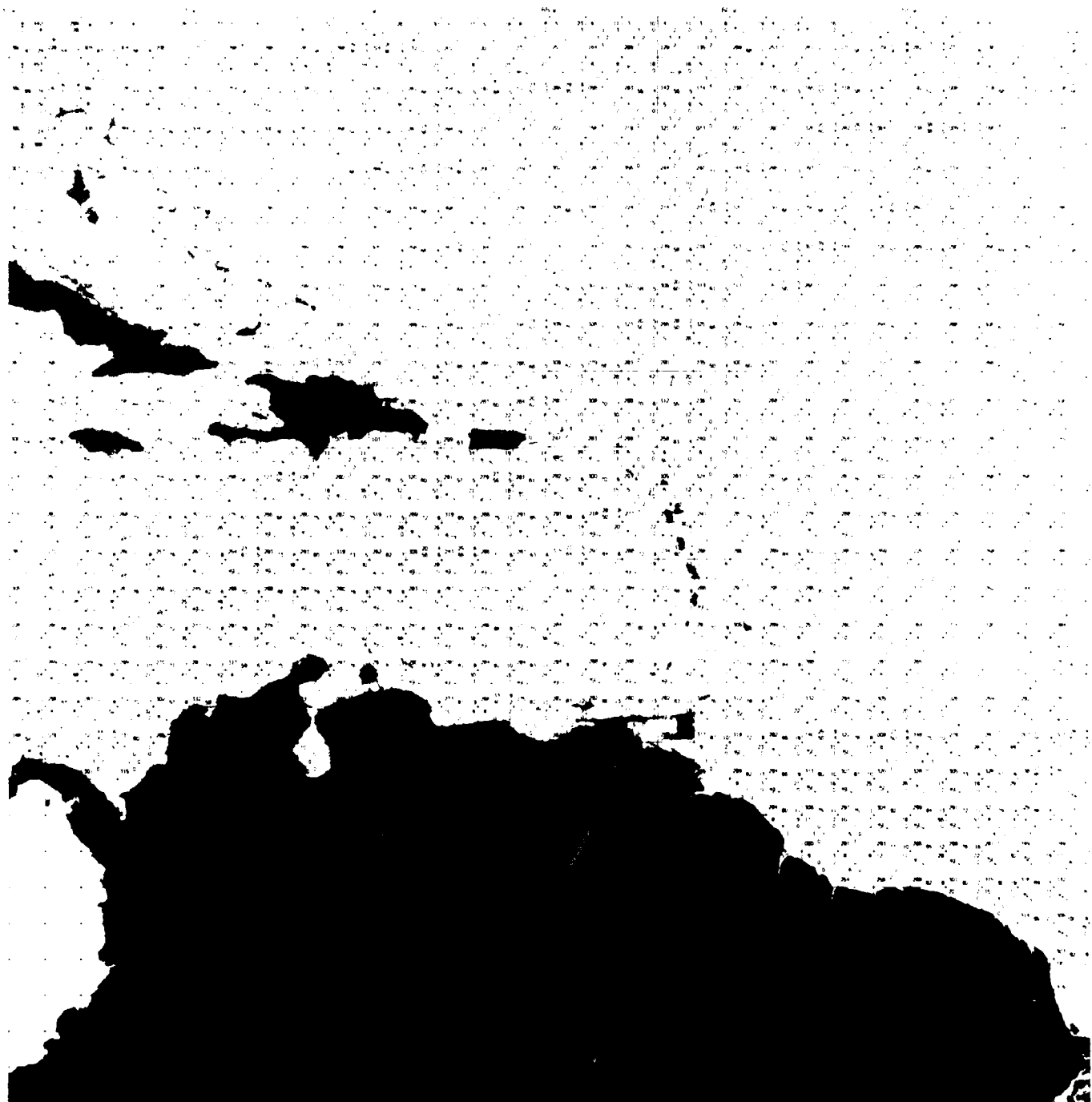
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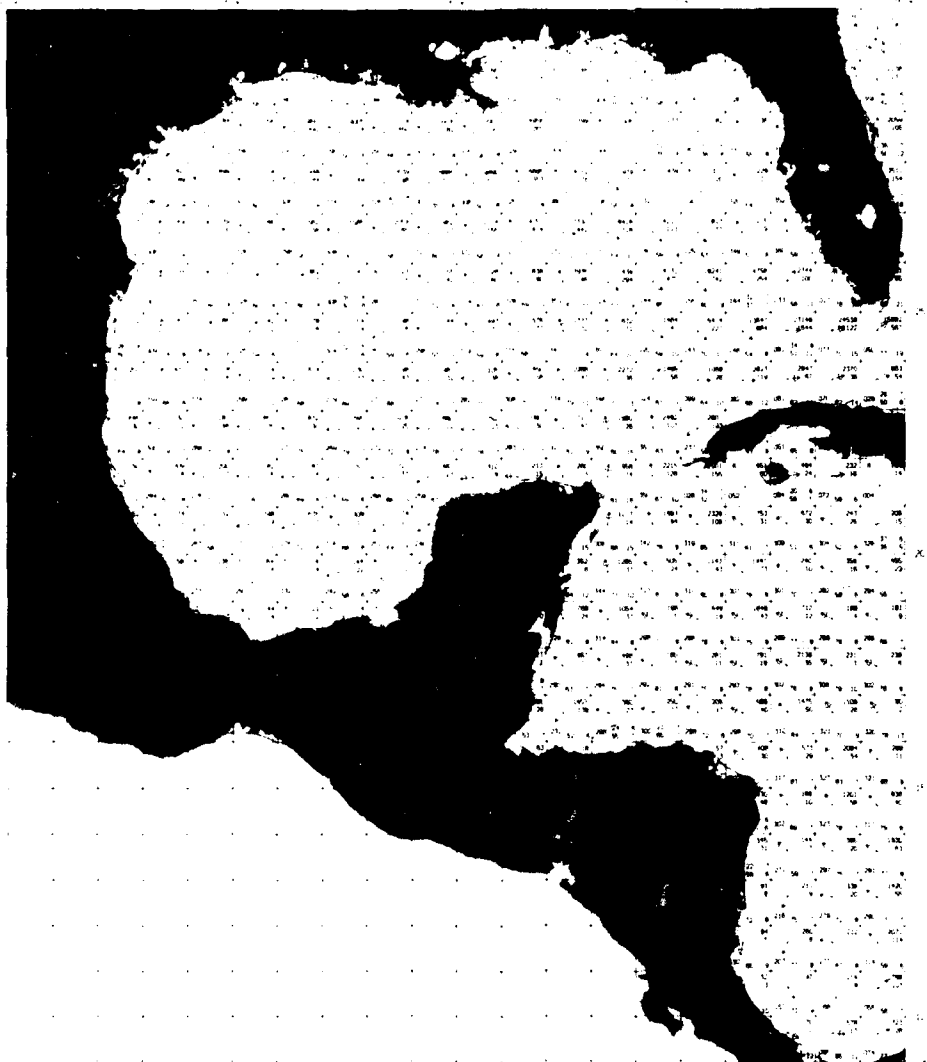
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DECEMBER



**ANNUAL—JAN THROUGH DEC**



ANNUAL—JAN THROUGH DEC





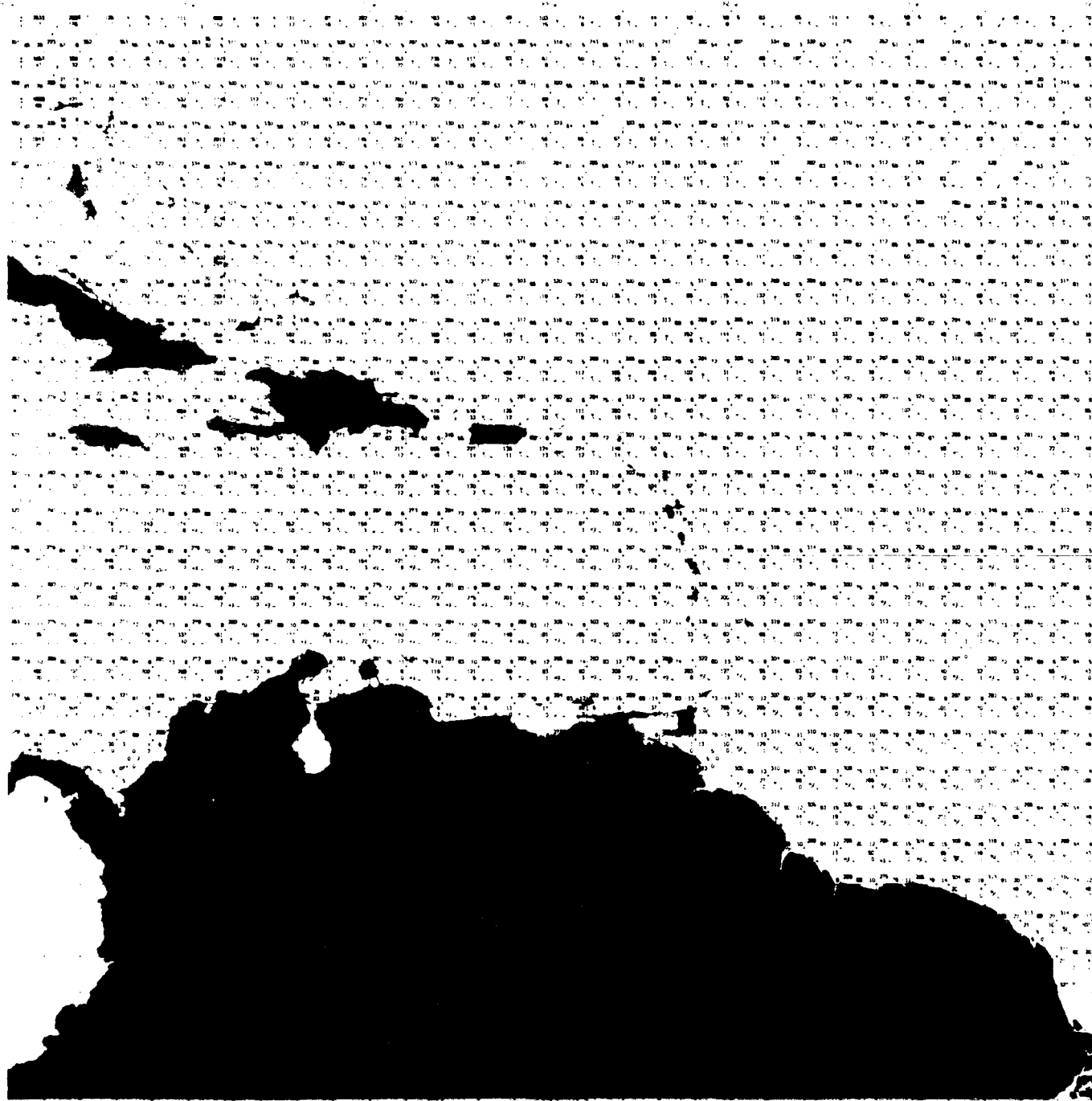
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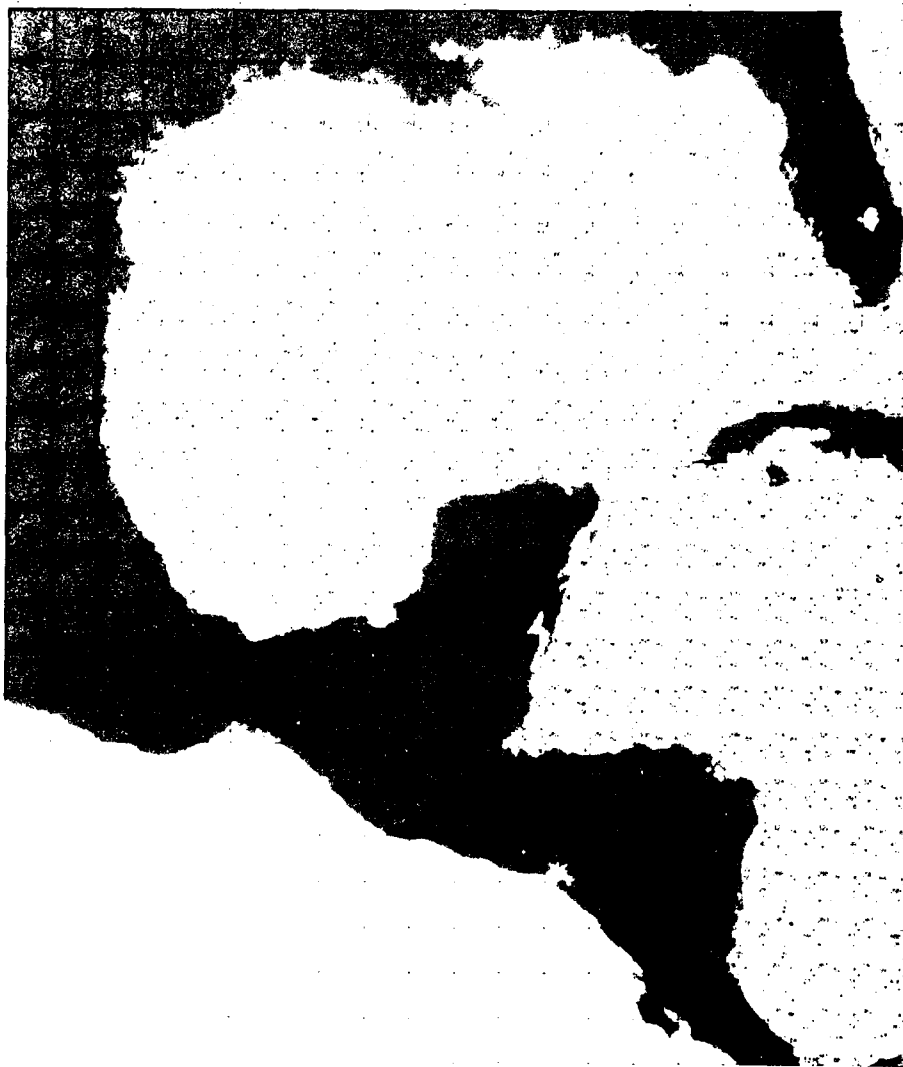
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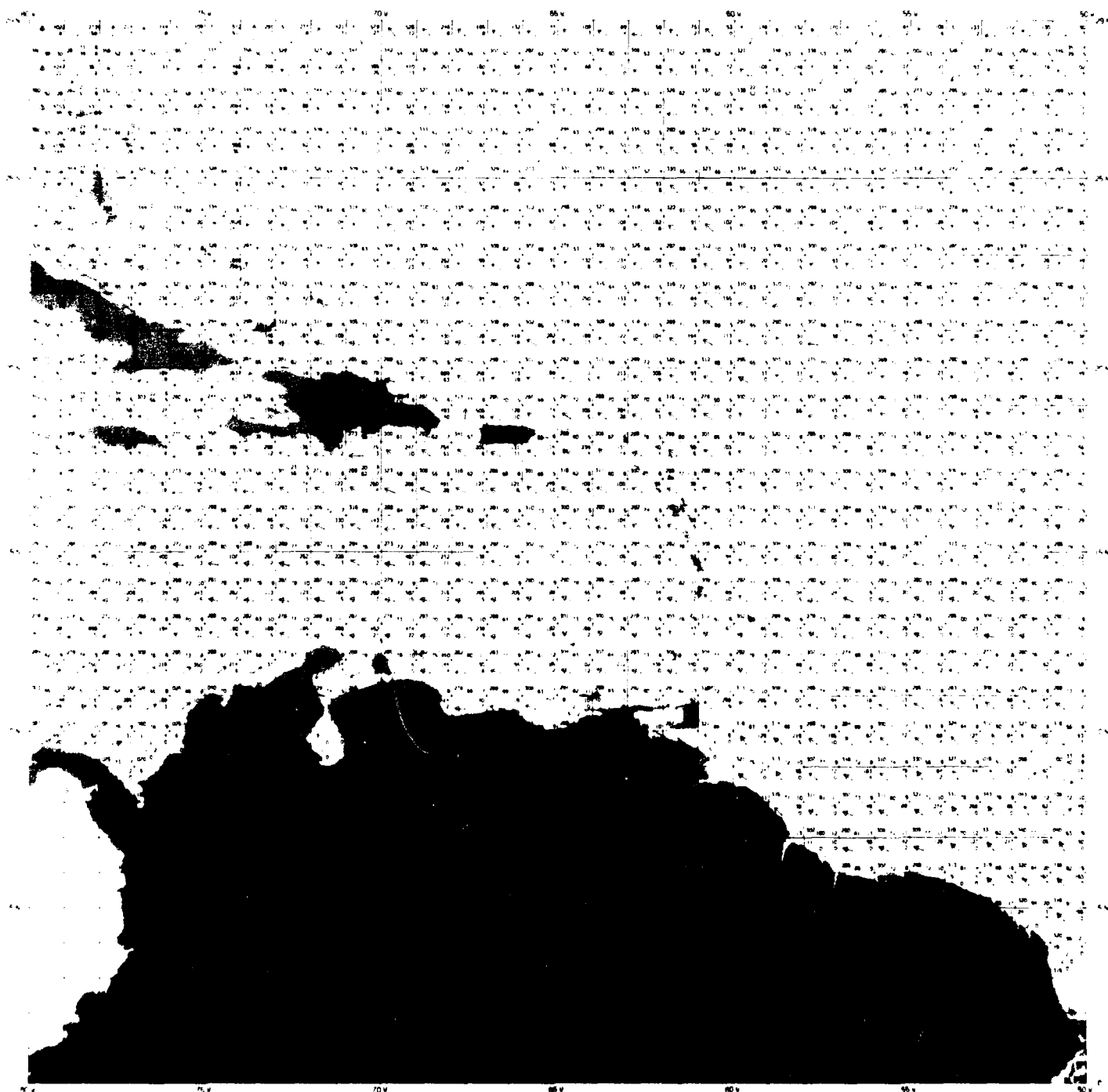
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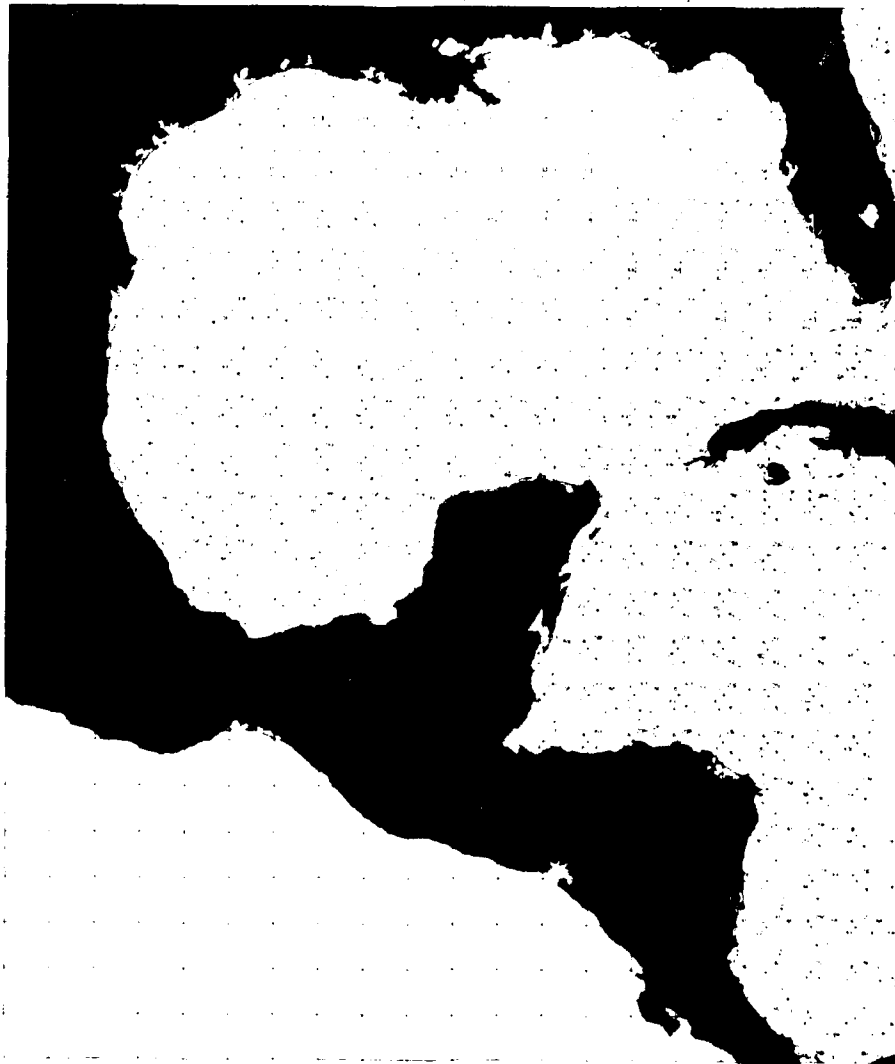
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**SUMMER—JUL, AUG, SEP**



SUMMER—JULY, AUG, SEP



**AUTUMN—OCT, NOV, DEC**



AUTUMN—OCT, NOV, DEC





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